1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

532 detail of the work. He disapproves of the habit which some painters have of adding novelties or original motives to the work. His view of his art is entirely mechanical and he knows little of a painter's technique. He practically only uses bought colours, and though he knows that a paint can be lightened by the addition of chalk, he does not know how to darken colours or how to mix his own colours. It is worth noting that before he started to learn to paint he occasionally drew people and birds for his own amusement, but that after he had been taught he never drew a line for the pleasure of it, but only when required to do so. His own house is completely undecorated.

778 All lamas acquire considerable dexterity in the fashioning of
532 impermanent sacrificial objects for different ceremonies; these are made at great speed, with astounding agility and deftness. The most complicated objects are the *deu*, or house of supernaturals, which consist of varied and elaborate geometrical designs in various coloured thread twisted round bamboo splinters, and fastened on to a single bamboo upright. Models of different supernaturals, of a more or less life-like appearance, are made out of the flour of different grains mixed with water to form a paste, or out of mud, and are decorated with butter, plain or dyed to different colours, various coloured wools and pieces of thread and cloth. The Mun decorate their sacrifical objects far less, but they occasionally use containers of green bamboo, on the outside of which elaborate geometrical designs are quickly and accurately scratched with the point of a knife.

412 The knife is practically the Lepcha's only instrument. The knives are of iron with a wooden handle and a blade about eighteen inches long and three inches wide; the whole of one side is a cutting edge
● [439] and the tip is square, not pointed. These knives are now bought from traders in Mangan or Gangtok; formerly they were got from Tibetans in exchange for produce. As soon as a boy achieves physical independence he is given a small knife of his own, and, except in the case of lamas when they are officiating, you can never see a Lepcha outside his house without his knife in a one-sided bamboo scabbard slung by his side. This knife is used for every conceivable purpose, from lopping trees on land about to be cultivated, to cutting up meat or wood for any domestic or agricultural task. Except for a couple of hatchets, which are loaned about the village when big trees have to be cut down, and short hoes for terracing, these knives are the universal instrument for every purpose. Girls

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

hunting of any other animal); if this rule is not observed the bears will escape from their trap unharmed. Bear skins and also their gall bladders which are much sought after by the Chinese as aphrodisiacs (they fetch Rs. 5 apiece in Kalimpong) were an inducement to catch these animals when money was not plentiful or non-existent; nowadays with money from cardamum there is less economic justification for taking the risks involved. Catching small birds in snares does not count as hunting; it is one of the commonest pursuits of boys after the age of about eight, who take their catches home as presents for their mother.

ii

The agricultural land in Zongu can be divided into two categories: the land under permanent cultivation, and the land which is cleared for crops once in every eight years. The permanent cultivation is of three types; there is the *sing* or field-garden against the house, cardamum fields and rice terraces. The two latter types of cultivation, which are now of very great importance in Lepcha life, are both very modern: cardamum was introduced at the beginning of the century, rice terraces for wet paddy less than twenty years ago. Potentially this permanent cultivation has introduced a new note into Lepcha life, though so far the effect is not noticeable. Both cardamum fields and rice terraces demand a certain amount of hard initial labour, after which they acquire, as it were, a capital value; this is less true of cardamum, which needs replanting every ten years, than of the rice terraces; to build these a considerable amount of work is needed, but once they are made a heavy crop can be raised from them with relatively little labour.

Until the beginning of this century the wealth of a Lepcha household depended on the energy of its members and on the proportion of able-bodied adults to dependants—children and the old and invalid—; if there was more than one dependent to one able-bodied adult life was liable to be rather hard. Nowadays it is theoretically possible that a lazy heir of industrious ancestors might be in a better position in the community than his own industry warranted. Formerly the inevitable rule of Lepcha economy was 'from each according to his ability; to each according to his work', tempered by the co-operation and willing help which was and is freely given to those afflicted by temporary or permanent

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

CHAPTER FOUR

MONEY LENDERS AND TRADING FRIENDS

i

426 At Mangan, on the main mule road between Tibet and Gangtok, above the only solid bridge which connects Zongu with the 439 mainland, are a group of half-a-dozen mixed stores. These stores are owned by Indians, members of the Mahawari caste, a caste of hereditary money lenders and misers. They have been settled in the neighbourhood about thirty years; before Mangan was developed they lived at Singthem. Ostensibly they are only shopkeepers; in point of fact their chief profit is made by advancing cash and goods to the neighbouring peasants against their produce. Formerly they used to deal with every sort of crop, but since the introduction of cardamum they have concentrated exclusively on that. The State has given these traders, or, as they are locally called, kanya, the monopoly of the cardamum trade, and they are therefore able to impose a uniform price.

The presence of these kanya in the neighbourhood has been an almost unmitigated disaster for the Lepchas. Were they honest it would still be bad, for their proximity has to a considerable extent sapped the Lepchas' energy. It is easier to buy ready-made clothes than to go long journeys to obtain thread and then spin and make up the cloth; and so they buy cheap and shoddy cloth and ready-made clothes; they are colder, dirtier and more ragged than they used to be and their children die of bronchial complaints. In the lean summer months it is easier to get grain on credit than to search for food in the forest; and so, through the line of least resistance they get more and more heavily into debt.

The Lepchas are at a complete disadvantage in dealing with the kanya. Neither they nor anybody outside the caste can read the peculiar script of the Mahawari; but the Lepchas cannot deal with figures and are unable to calculate the prices they should

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

426 receive or the debts they owe; when they get receipts they cannot read them nor tell if they are correct. Though they have a strong
●439 conviction that they are badly cheated by the kanya they can do nothing about it; intentional dishonesty in any form is so alien to them that they cannot comprehend or deal with it; they puzzle about the sums that the kanya say they owe; they are convinced that they are too high, but they cannot dispute them and have to pay. Since the kanya have the cardamum monopoly and collect the selling tax the Lepchas cannot take their produce elsewhere; and it is questionable if it would pay them to do so, for against the higher prices obtainable in Gangtok and Kalimpong must be set the cost of porterage. As with many such crops the price is often higher at the end of the season than at the beginning, but the kanya will not let them wait on the market; at the beginning of the season they send representatives to their debtors claiming immediate payment, and threatening Court proceedings if the cardamum is not forthwith handed over. If the kanya would give cash for the surplus crop the Lepchas would be better off; but it is extremely difficult to get ready money, beyond what is needed for tax-paying, out of them. When the cardamum is brought in the kanya claim that they have no money to hand and force goods, either metal ware, or china, or cloth, on to the sellers. And if during the rest of the year people come in to buy goods, rice seed, or cloth, or salt, they refuse to take cash except for quite small sums (say under Rs. 10). They bully and force and persuade the Lepchas to take goods on credit whether they want them or not.

426 Their rates of interest are extortionate. For a maund of rice or Rs. 10 worth of shop goods they demand a maund of cardamum. The cash price of rice at Mangan is Rs. 5/12; the present price of cardamum is Rs. 12 and it has been considerably higher. If there is not sufficient cardamum to pay the debt at harvest time the arrear is carried forward at a maund-and-a-half for a maund, or Rs. –/6 for Rs. 1. The rate of interest charged on loans comes to 25% per year at the lowest. According to a reliable informant outside Zongu I was told that according to the laws of Sikkim State no interest is allowed to be charged on goods sold on credit and a maximum of 12½% on cash loans.

Some years ago, it is said, a complaint was made to the Central Court that the kanya were using false measure, taking off 5 seers in the maund (10 lbs. in 80); the kanya were fined Rs. 3,000 and

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

426 always done. Inside the village the hire of a pair of bullocks is 8 lbs. of grain for one day or 12 lbs. for two.

ii

608 439 [386 314] Before the beginning of this century when money was introduced and shops set up in the neighbourhood, Lepchas had to travel abroad to obtain cloth and thread, salt and metal goods. They used to collect in the forest the red dye-wood called *vyim* (the Nepali call it *majita*) and take that and whatever surplus crops they had up to the Tibetan border, where they would exchange it for salt and wool. Some of the salt they would then take to Darjeeling to exchange for thread and cloth. In order to be able to trade continuously and to receive hospitality and protection in foreign countries a formal relationship with religious sanctions was instituted. This relationship, and the two parties who entered into it, were called *ingʒong*,[1] which means literally 'like a younger brother'. For the formal establishment of an *ingʒong* relationship a pig must be killed and the intestines (*shafot*) offered to the Gods, in particular Komsi*thing*, the Lepcha supernatural who invented the relationship and who is, as it were, its patron saint; then a feast is held and the pig eaten, and the two contracting parties swear solemn oaths always to love and help one another, and never to do or think evil; after this an old and experienced man (not a lama, but it matters not who else) prepares the rite of *sakyou-faat*, the sacrifice of butter, which recurs in almost all Mun ceremonies; a cup is filled with strained *chi* and four dabs of butter are smeared round the sides; holding this the old man addresses the two who wish to become *ingʒong*, impressing on them the seriousness of the occasion, and the sanctions which would follow the breaking of their vows. Each of the *ingʒong* then drinks out of the cup and eats two of the dabs of butter. This solemnises the situation, and should either thereafter speak evil of or harm the other the god Komsi*thing* will send the devil Sankyor *moong* to punish him. It is said that Komsi*thing* first thought of the institution in the early days of creation when he was drunk; he then made *ingʒong* with all the foreigners who had goods which he did not possess: with the Nepali for their pigs, with the Plains Indians for their copper vessels, with the Bhutanese for their fine cloth, with the Tibetans for their rugs, and with the Sikkimese for their oxen.

[1] Lepchas tell me that the Tibetan term is *re-koo*, the Bhutanese *pre-koo*, the Nepali *mit*.

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

Once the full ceremony has been performed the two *ingʒong* are regarded as being in truth sons of one father, and intermarriage between their descendants is forbidden as incestuous for nine generations. The relationship between one *ingʒong* and his *ingʒong*'s wife is a respectful one, and to mark his respect he will usually address her as 'mother'. It would be almost incestuous to sleep with your *ingʒong*'s wife, but a woman does not have to hide from her husband's *ingʒong* as is the case with the *mit* of Nepal.[2] As a general rule the *ingʒong* relationship is hereditary, the sons of *ingʒong* being themselves *ingʒong*; but there is no compulsion about this and if a son does not get on with his father's *ingʒong* and his sons he can set up new relationships. Even with hereditary *ingʒong* the full ceremonial must be performed in each generation.

Nowadays the Lepchas only set up the relationship with Sikkimese and Tibetans, for the exchange of crops and dye-wood for salt, carpets and metal vessels; they are, they say, no longer friendly with the Nepali and will have no relationships with them. *Ingʒong* is not an exclusive relationship. At the end of March a Sikkimese-Tibetan husband and wife from Lachen arrived in Lingthem with rugs which they wished to exchange for crops, dye-wood and cash. In the whole Talung valley they had eleven *ingʒong*, three of whom were in Lingthem; they spent one night in the house of each. When an *ingʒong* arrives on a visit efforts are made to feast him as well as possible; and when Lepchas go to visit their *ingʒong* they take with them presents of grain, and, if possible, meat. Most of the men of Lingthem have at least three Sikkimese or Tibetan *ingʒong*.

Properly speaking the term *ingʒong* is only applicable to the ceremonial trading-relationship set up between Lepchas and foreigners; but the word is very frequently used between Lepchas with the meaning 'my special friend.' It sometimes happens that two men will drink *chi* together ceremoniously to give some formality to their relationship; but they do not perform the full ceremony for that would entail the nine-generation marriage ban, and in the small community of Zongu, where the choice of wives is already limited, this would speedily produce an impossible state of affairs. It took me a considerable time to straighten out the different implications of the term *ingʒong*, for the word is in constant use,

[2] For this fact and for other details in this book concerning the Nepali I am indebted to information derived from Mr. C. J. Morris, either in conversation or from his book '*Gurkhas*' *Handbooks for the Indian Army* (Delhi 1936).

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

X159 *March 22nd.*

Went to exorcism service of *Go-seum* performed for Dátoop's second son, Pichi. Kurma was present assisting in the ceremony. He was more than half drunk and at one moment asked for money to be given to Datoop, which caused very great general embarrassment.

March 24th.

Went down to Pembu's house where the roof was being re-thatched. Kurma arrived rather late in the morning when the work was in full progress, being done fairly haphazardly, and tried to get the work done more efficiently by bossing the other workers, but he was soon forced to give it up.

March 25th.

Kurma came up for a few minutes saying he could not stop and spent a couple of hours discussing marriage regulations.

March 27th.

Kurma and Tinkep, the other *gyapön*, overheard near the monastery saying how indignant they were that at yesterday's Konchen Tyuchen (monastery feast in honour of Kinchenjunga) which was given by Songpo and Katel they were neither of them invited and when they did arrive were not offered anything; they both went away at once.

March 28th.

[439] Two 'Tibetans' arrived from Lachen this morning; they were a man and his wife who came with blankets to sell, or rather exchange against red dye-wood, salt or money. They have eleven *ingtong* in all the valley—three in this village. They will stay a night with each. Last night they stopped with Kurma.

March 29th.

Kurma spent all the morning chiefly talking about Padem and Mun, and talked about his own possession by the Padem.

March 30th.

Visit from the Mandal of Lungdeum; during the day Kurma and Jiroong came up, general talk chiefly about sex. Kurma told an anecdote in pantomime which was one of his favourite stories and often came up. One day at a wedding (it was a rainy day), near the

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

also used for cooking rice. It is sometimes the custom to pickle corpses when, for instance, it is desired to postpone burial until some auspicious day. Large copper vessels, as big as a barrel, are used for this purpose; in Lingtem there were only two. These belonged to the Mandal, who kindly lent us one to store our water! It was near to the time of departure, however, before I realised their proper function. The Mandal assured us that, in point of fact, no corpse had ever been stored in our particular pot; but I feel sure that he thought we were being unduly squeamish. Perhaps we were.

Both rooms of a house are normally used for sleeping, but there is some sort of idea that if the inner room contains an altar (which is not always the case) it should be slept in only by Lamas: this rule, however, like many others, seems to be disregarded. Only the outer clothing is removed at night, and the people sleep on the floor. There is little attempt at privacy; nor indeed would this be possible where as many as fifteen people, as was the case in Tafoor's house for instance, have to be accommodated in two small rooms. This is perhaps an extreme instance; but it is unusual, except in the case of an elderly childless couple, to find less than four or five people occupying one room.

Men wear a pair of loosely-cut cotton shorts and a cotton shirt of Tibetan pattern. The shorts are made unnecessarily large in the waist, the surplus being folded over and tucked in in order to keep them up. Both these articles are made from machine-made material, and are usually obtained (at exorbitant prices) from Hindu shopkeepers in Mangen. On top of them they generally wear the Lepcha *dum-dyum*, an attractive home-spun garment woven from imported white cotton with a typical striped design in red, blue, and yellow. This is no longer much made in Lingtem, and is usually obtained from some other Lepcha village. The Lingtem people seem to think they are better employed in tending their crops, and that it is really cheaper to buy their cloth rather than have the women make it at home. It seems a pity. The *dum-dyum* is not a made-up garment

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

773 shelter, for he was hungry and tired. There were many huge
539 pigs lying about outside the house, one of which the people killed and roasted. They also gave him *chi* and rice, which he had never before tasted. He stayed in Mayel for seven days; and when he left the people gave him all sorts of grains and vegetables, at the same time asking him to tell no one what he had seen. On the way back the pumpkins, cucumbers, and other vegetables turned into stone; but the rice was planted and has been cultivated in Lingtem ever since."

* * * * *

439 No food is exported from Jongu, the people growing merely sufficient to meet their own needs; and to this I think may partly be attributed their superior physique compared, for instance, with Lepchas in the Kalimpong and Darjeeling districts of British India.

243 Rice grown in the hills is of much better quality than that
439 grown in the plains and is in demand all over India. Kalim-
[435] pong rice, for instance, sells at the present time (July 1937) at Rs5/4 a maund (approximately eighty pounds), whereas that grown in the plains can be bought in Kalimpong for Rs3/4 a maund. The depressing result of this economic factor is that the town-dwelling Lepcha (and of course the Nepali) is forced to sell his own rice for export, while himself living on the inferior plains variety; and there is no doubt that his physique and general health suffer accordingly.

164 Tuberculosis, for instance, is spreading alarmingly in these two districts, whereas in Jongu it is at present practically unknown. From statistics given me by the Tuberculosis dispensary in Kalimpong it appears that at present the incidence of this disease is considerably less amongst Lepchas than amongst the other people; but even amongst them it is steadily gaining ground. This, as I have already pointed out, is probably not unconnected with the different living conditions of the two peoples; but a more nourishing diet, such as the people get in their own natural conditions, would undoubtedly help towards stamping out the disease.

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

224 this three times, very solemnly and in the form of an oath.
539 After this the Mandal's luck changed, but the other man never again killed an animal. This is a true story.

224 869 Before a hunter can make sacrifices to Pong Rum he must first learn how. He takes a present of *chi* and rice to some experienced hunter and asks to be instructed: but he must take care that no woman knows what he is doing. The teacher will then make an offering to the god, at the same time telling it that in future the boy will make the sacrifice himself, and that he should therefore be pleased to accept it. The young hunter now sits with his back to the teacher, who goes through the sacrificial formula phrase by phrase. He does this very slowly, so that the boy may commit the words to memory. By sitting with his back to the teacher his mind is not distracted and he is thus able to concentrate better. As soon as he can repeat the words correctly he may make the sacrifice himself; but the next time he kills an animal he will do the sacrifice in the presence of his teacher. If he makes a mistake the teacher taps him gently on the shoulder, but he makes no comment. That particular sacrifice, however, is ineffective, and the boy must come again. He does this until he is word-perfect, but need take no further presents to his teacher.

411 824 The bow is the weapon most commonly used in Jongu, both for hunting and for killing domestic cattle. It is made of bamboo and strung with toughened fibre made from the young shoots of a special kind of tree-fern. Arrows are made from the stems of the *Parong* (*Deeringia celosiodes*) and tipped with kites' feathers. The arrow-head, which is detachable and usually remains in the kill, is made from *Payung* wood (*Actinodaphne Sikkimensis*) and is smeared with aconite; but
● [439 177] metal arrow-heads, imported from Gangtok, are nowadays replacing the home-made wooden variety. Domestic cattle are killed with unpoisoned arrows, fired at the heart from a distance of only a yard or two. The arrow-holder is merely a length of hollow bamboo fitted with a cap, and is slung over the shoulder with a length of cane. Cane,

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

shredded and twisted into a thread, is also used for all the bindings.

The bow is grasped with the thumb, second, third, and fourth fingers of the left hand, the first finger remaining straight out and pointing in the direction of the mark. The arrow rests against the left side of the belly of the bow and is held with the thumb and first finger of the right hand, which grasp it over the string. The bow is held in a vertical position and the arrow is drawn back until its head is about two inches in front of the belly. This is for shooting at normal ranges; but if it is wished to increase the distance the arrow can be drawn back behind the belly, in which case the whole bow is pointed slightly upwards in order to give the arrow a higher trajectory. In order to tighten the bow-string it is merely undone and given a few twists. Some people wear a protector bracelet of bullock's horn on the left wrist, but this is not really essential.

In addition to the ordinary bow used for hunting there is also a small pellet bow, with which mud pellets, about the size of a marble, are used. It is used principally to kill small birds and also to scare them away from the crops, and is really little more than boys' plaything.

The only tool in use is the *ban*, a very slightly curved knife about fourteen inches in length. It looks something like a rather clumsy and heavy carving knife, but with a rounded end instead of a point. It is used for everything, from making bows and arrows to the construction of a house; and while in European hands it appears to be a clumsy weapon, Lepchas are able to use it successfully for the very finest work. No Lepcha, not even a Lama, is ever without his *ban*, which is worn in a bamboo half-sheath and suspended over one shoulder by a length of cane. They are far more skilful in its use than the Gurkha is with his *khukri*, another general utility weapon, which incidentally is never used as a boomerang, as some of the tall stories current during the war years would lead one to suppose. There are no black-smiths among the Lepchas, and *ban* blades are imported

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

from Mangen or Gangtok, being afterwards fitted with wooden handles by their owners. They cost from one to two rupees each. I have often seen a Lepcha cut down a bamboo as thick as a man's arm with a couple of strokes and a few seconds later, using the very same tool, put a point on a pencil that would be good enough to draw the finest line. Give a Lepcha his *ban* and put him in his own native forest and he will make you anything from a house to a wooden plate off which to eat your food. With the same one weapon he will make you a bow and arrows, and then skin and prepare the game. I never ceased to wonder at his skill.

There were two ancient matchlocks in Lingtem, one of which Palden occasionally borrowed. It was fitted with a bipod of antelope horns, and when the fuse was lighted usually spluttered for some seconds before going off with a deafening bang; but by this time the selected prey had long since flown. I would not myself have used it for untold cash; but in the eyes of its owner, and perhaps in the rest of the village, it was a symbol of progress—a mark of the civilised man.

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

439 426 Until about twenty years ago most of the Jongu people used to take forest dyes to Lachen, in North Sikkim, which they exchanged for Tibetan salt and wool. They kept a certain amount of this salt for their own use, but the bulk of it they took into Darjeeling, where they exchanged it for raw cotton, which their women spun into cloth. But gradually the money-lender, who all over India is also a general-trader, wormed his way into Sikkim; and found the Lepchas easy prey. One rather unexpected result of this is that the Jongu people no longer wander far from home; and although most of the older people have been often as far afield as Darjeeling and Kalimpong, very few of the younger generation have been further than Gangtok, and only then for a very occasional jaunt.

439 608 In the days before the money-lenders arrived most of the Jongu people had a number of *Ingzong*, or blood-brothers, in various parts of the country in order to facilitate their trading relations. A few of the people still have *Ingzong* in Lachen, but the system seems to be gradually lapsing except as a means of cementing a close friendship. Thus, a number of Lingtem men have become *Ingzong* with fellow-villagers; but in these cases the relationship has no economic basis. 476 In times of trouble an *Ingzong* will help one, and even work one's fields, if necessary. Karma says that one can always be sure of a good meal at the house of an *Ingzong;* but apart from this, it is useful to have a friend whom one can regard almost as a relation. He says there is no ceremony in acquiring an *Ingzong;* but the two men will usually drink out of the same bowl and exchange ceremonial scarves. If one wishes, one can cease the relationship: this is not done formally, but merely allowed to lapse gradually and naturally. 834 There are apparently no sexual privileges with the womenfolk of an *Ingzong*, nor, on the other hand, any particular taboos; but owing to the fact that sexual relations among the Lepchas are, in any case, so free, my information on this point is somewhat conflicting. The *Ingzong* relationship is carried out only by men.

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

426 fact, the Sikkim Laws lay down that no money-lender may charge a higher rate than this; but who can control this in a district where the money-lender himself is the only one who can read and write? People are required to give a receipt when they take a loan, but all they can do in actual practice is to affix their thumb-impression to the account written out by the money-lender himself: they neither know nor care what he has written. All that interests them is that they have been able to satisfy their immediate requirements, and it is only later, when the money-lender forecloses on them, [185] that they find out how they have been cheated. With a view to remedying this state of affairs a Jongu boy was sent to Gangtok in order to be educated, with the idea that on his return he could at least give the people some help in their dealings with the traders; but unfortunately he was only taught Tibetan! The Mandal thinks the only remedy would be to insist upon the money-lenders keeping their accounts in that language, an arrangement comparable with ordering an English bank to keep its accounts in Chinese.

426 ● 439 A further cause of debt is that the money-lender takes every opportunity of foisting unwanted goods upon the Lepchas, who have not the strength of mind to refuse, especially when no payment is demanded at the time. This usually takes the form of cotton material of the very poorest [291] quality, as a result of which most of the people, and particularly the children, are nowadays clothed in material ill suited to the climate. At one time they used a great deal of wool; but in recent years most of the Tibetan wool has been taken down to Kalimpong, where it is sold in bulk and shipped to America; and it is only when the bottom falls out of the American market, as it has at the moment of writing, that the Lepchas can afford to buy wool, for the price is otherwise much higher than they can afford. I tried to explain the mystery of fluctuating prices to them, but it was impossible to make them understand that a man at the end of a telephone in a distant country, the name of which they had not even heard, was ultimately responsible for deciding

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

whether they should get warm woollen clothes, or have to put up with shoddy cotton. I should like to think that at least the Tibetan farmer made something out of the transaction; but he, too, is in the hands of the Indian moneylenders in Kalimpong, caught in the intricacies of a vicious circle. The remedy is, of course, obvious; but in present circumstances almost impossible of attainment.

Cardamoms are a State monopoly, and the right to trade in them has been sold to the official State Bankers, an outside concern which, in its turn, also controls all the moneylenders in the State. This is a convenient arrangement for the authorities and saves the provision of numerous extra officials; but even if the State itself assumed control of the business there would be no means of ensuring that the peasants were not cheated, petty (and usually underpaid) officials being much the same all over the East. Under the present system of taxation the people must obviously grow cardamoms, as in no other way can they raise the necessary cash with which to pay their taxes: and from a theoretical point of view their cultivation is a source of extra profit. Indeed, this actually is the case in many parts of Sikkim, where the people are more sophisticated, and better able to safeguard their own interests. There is no doubt that when the Maharaja's predecessors introduced this plant into Sikkim they did so with the motive of improving the people's economic condition; but in those days no one could be expected to foresee the disastrous effects of introducing uncontrolled monetary trading into an illiterate community, organised on socialist lines, which previously had no need of actual cash. As it is, cardamoms are a perfect curse in Jongu.

7: Hooker D-5 (1849-1851) 1854
AK5 Lepcha AK5

his share, coming up and giving the donor a brusque bow and thanks. They have learnt to overcharge already, and use extortion in dealing, as is the custom with the people of the plains; but it is clumsily done, and never accompanied with the grasping air and insufferable whine of the latter. They are constantly armed with a long, heavy, straight knife,* but never draw it on one another: family and political feuds are alike unheard of amongst them.

The Lepcha is in morals far superior to his Tibet and Bhotan neighbours, polyandry being unknown, and polygamy rare. This is no doubt greatly due to the conventual system not being carried to such an excess as in Bhotan, where the ties of relationship even are disregarded.

Like the New Zealander, Tasmanian, Fuegian, and natives of other climates, which, though cold, are moist and equable, the Lepcha's dress is very scanty, and when we are wearing woollen under-garments and hose, he is content with one cotton vesture, which is loosely thrown round the body, leaving one or both arms free; it reaches to the knee, and is gathered round the waist: its fabric is close, the ground colour white, ornamented with longitudinal blue stripes, two or three fingers broad, prettily worked with red and white. When new and clean, this garb is remarkably handsome and gay, but not showy. In cold weather an upper garment with loose sleeves is added.

A long knife, with a common wooden handle, hangs by the side, stuck in a sheath; he has often also a quiver of poisoned arrows and a bamboo† bow across his back. On his right wrist is a curious wooden guard for the

* It is called "Ban," and serves equally for plough, toothpick, table-knife, hatchet, hammer, and sword.

† The bamboo, of which the quiver is made, is thin and light: it is brought from Assam, and called Tulda, or Dulwa, by the Bengalees.

7: Hooker D-5 (1849-1851) 1854
AK5 Lepcha AK5

bowstring; and a little pouch, containing aconite poison and a few common implements, is suspended to his girdle. A hat he seldom wears, and when he does, it is often extravagantly broad and flat-brimmed, with a small hemispherical crown. It is made of leaves of *Scitamineæ*, between two thin plates of bamboo-work, clumsy and heavy; this is generally used in the rainy weather, while in the dry a conical one is worn, also of platted slips of bamboo, with broad flakes of talc between the layers, and a peacock's feather at the side. The umbrella consists of a large hood, much like the ancient boat called a coracle, which being placed over the head reaches to the thighs behind. It is made of platted bamboo, enclosing broad leaves of *Phrynium*. A group of Lepchas with these on, running along in the pelting rain, are very droll figures; they look like snails with their shells on their backs. All the Lepchas are fond of ornaments, wearing silver hoops in their ears, necklaces made of cornelian, amber, and turquoise, brought from Tibet, and pearls and corals from the south, with curious silver and golden charm-boxes or amulets attached to their necks or arms. These are of Tibetan workmanship, and often of great value: they contain little idols, charms and written prayers, or the bones, hair, or nail-parings of a Lama: some are of great beauty, and highly ornamented. In these decorations, and in their hair, they take some pride, the ladies frequently dressing the latter for the gentlemen: thus one may often see, the last thing at night, a damsel of discreet port, demurely go behind a young man, unplait his pig-tail, teaze the hair, thin it of some of its lively inmates, braid it up for him, and retire. The women always wear two braided pig-tails, and it is by this they are most readily distinguished from their effeminate-looking partners, who wear only one.

11:Hermanns M-5 (1951)1954
AK5 Lepcha AK5

Besides the knowledge of edible objects the Rong are well acquainted with poisons. They know the secret of a deadly poison for making poisoned arrows. A fairly thick layer is smeared on the lower half of the arrow head but none whatsoever on the point. A very slight wound is enough to kill any animal. The great advantage of this poison is that it does not enter the blood stream but acts locally so that the entire flesh is not poisoned. The injured portion has necessarily to be cut away. The poison consists of a very complicated mixture of ingredients which points to the long experience the Lepchas have in its manufacture. The first ingredient, "Father of the poison" called *ning-dyūd, is obtained from* Tibet. The theory is that a bird scrapes out of the earth a peculiar root, eats part of it and gains immense strength. The Tibetans collect the remainder of the root and trade with the Lepchas who prepare the poison. Death quickly ensues if even the tiniest fragment of the root is consumed. Another ingredient, bar-lang, is a root, which, in the language of the Rong, is called rog-log. The third ingredient is obtained from gōn-chong. Neither of the roots is found in the high mountains but has to be procured from the neighbourhood of the plains. Yet another root is called se-red in Lepcha, and ga-gra in Nepalese. In addition there is the poison extracted from the root of a shrub which bears a yellow flower, and whose name the hunter could no longer remember. Gōn-liong-rik serves as the "conduct" for these poisons. So potent is the effect of this poison that a person is liable to lose his life even if he inhales the odour it gives off for too long a period. Without the admixture of the poison from Tibet, the other poisons cannot be localised and the entire flesh of the animal would be rendered unedible. Thus we see that the poison for arrows is very complicated and the process of preparation is known only to the Rong. The other people fear them because of this knowledge of poisons.

The fruit of the above-mentioned rog-log is called rog-log-pot, and only a very few people are in a position to procure it. A strong poison is made from it. A poison for the killing of fish is called bū-rū. This is obtained from the leaves of the gol-gung tree by rubbing them down in a mortar. The poison, if thrown into a tank, kills all the fish but in no way makes them inedible.